



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Essential Energy to slash 165 regional jobs; force workers to compete with each other for remaining positions

Essential Energy has announced plans to slash 165 people from their workforce across regional NSW through a process that will force workers to compete with their colleagues to determine who gets to keep their jobs.

The NSW Government-owned electricity distributor — which operates the electricity poles and wires across 95 per cent of NSW — has given workers less than a week to respond to the plan to forcibly slash jobs.

While every one of Essential Energy's 100 regional depots risks losing jobs, the company has privately told workers that the Port Macquarie, Grafton, Taree, Bathurst and Lismore regions will be particularly hard hit.

Since 2015, more than 2,000 jobs have been cut at Essential Energy, nearly halving the workforce and drastically reducing the skilled front-line workers available to respond to blackouts, storm damage, or other major incidents.

The company blamed the Australian Energy Regulator for the cuts, saying the money spent on building, upgrading and replacing infrastructure will be cut by 11.5 per cent during the next five years, while general operating expenses need to be reduced by 3.9 per cent.

The Electrical Trades Union slammed the announcement, saying the use of forced redundancies along with a "hunger games" style competition between workers to hold onto their jobs was causing unnecessary hardship.

"The loss of 165 skilled jobs at Essential Energy is devastating news, but it's been made that much harder by the heartless way management are implementing these cuts," ETU Secretary Justin Page said.

"Workers have been given less than a week to respond to the plan, with the first staff to be made forcibly redundant as early as July 10, but we are examining every legal and industrial avenue available to stop them.

"The worst part is that many of these cuts will be undertaken through what management have called a 'merit selection process', which will essentially pit workers against each other to save their own job.

"While Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy have also been forced to implement budget savings by the AER, they chose to engage in a genuine consultation process that is looking for alternatives to job losses, which is in stark contrast to Essential Energy management who are showing absolutely no regard for the wellbeing of their workers.

"Since 2015, when the National Party claimed they'd 'saved' Essential Energy from privatisation, we've seen the workforce absolutely gutted, with nearly half the skilled workers responsible for keeping the lights on across regional NSW shown the door.

"Deputy Premier John Barilaro was big on talk at the Nationals conference last week about being willing to stand up to his Liberal colleagues on issues that matter to regional NSW, well here's his chance to stick up for the bush, demand these jobs be protected, and stop the ongoing gutting of the regional electricity network."

*Essential Energy employees or their family members who require crisis support are urged to contact Lifeline (13 11 14 and [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)) or beyondblue (1300 22 4636 and [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)).*

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